



**Ithaca/Tompkins County  
Convention & Visitors Bureau**

2018 Mid-Year Report

6 months ending June 2018/ Q2





**A Message from Peggy Coleman**  
VP, TOURISM/CVB DIRECTOR



**The Right Tools & The Right Team to support  
Tompkins County Tourism Economy**

As we look back on the first half of 2018, it is inspiring to see the outcomes of the hard work invested by the CVB team. We continue to identify new tools like Simpleview, a CRM software to help make the team more productive as well as to better support our tourism partners. New workshops implemented by the marketing department were conducted for all Tompkins County Tourism Program marketing grant recipients. This has provided an opportunity for grant recipients to establish a more deliberate approach in their marketing efforts. The sales department has focused on more outreach in partnership with our tourism businesses, including a sales mission geared toward meeting and event planners in the Capital District planned for July 2018. The visitor experience department is assisting more visitors than ever before. We hope you have seen the team on campus or throughout the community in the Visit Ithaca van.

Every department continues to prepare for the new Tompkins Center for History & Culture coming in 2019. Various staff have been involved in the following areas including: governance, website, communications, downtown visitor center relocation, and retail business plan development to support all center partners while not competing with downtown merchants.

The research team from Jones, Lang, and LaSalle began work in earnest to update the Visitor Profile Study, with impressive response so far. We are excited to learn more from the intercept interviews which are under way through June 2019. The results of this study will help formulate the Strategic Tourism direction for 2021 and beyond.

Thank you to our tourism partners for your willingness to work together to grow the economic vitality of Tompkins County through tourism. Let's keep the momentum going for the rest of 2018 and beyond.

Safe travels,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy Coleman". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Peggy Coleman**  
VP, Tourism/CVB Director



Visit Ithaca is a division of the Tompkins County Chamber of Commerce

**Off-site Activations**

The Visit Ithaca van is now a rolling billboard to have at off-site events as we support visitors where they are rather than asking them to come to us.



**Year to Date Visitor Touchpoints**

	2018
TG Requests	2170
Phone Calls	573
Website Chats	1659
DVC Walk In	1872
ESD Walk In	1186
TFSP Walk In	9762
<b>YTD Totals</b>	<b>17,222</b>

**Top 5 Feeder markets through Q2 – International:**

Canada, Israel, Germany, UK, Netherlands

**Top 5 Feeder markets through Q2 – Domestic:**

Florida, Ohio, New Jersey Pennsylvania, New York

**Expanding the Brand**

We've successfully spread the love of our Ithaca is Gorges brand through June 2018, already topping our annual goals. Apparel is our #1 seller! Local art is the next largest category people select as a memento of their visit to Tompkins County.

**TOP FIVE ITEMS:**

Fridge magnets  
**1100+**

Postcards  
**750+**

Ithaca is Gorges Tees  
**840+**

Finger Lakes Tees  
**540+**

**Chat**

Through June 2018 we've assisted 1659 visitors through our online chat feature.

**HOT TOPICS:**

Events

Lodging

Waterfalls/State Parks/Hiking

Attractions & Restaurants

✓ 915,095,486 regional impressions

✓ 50 placements on Finger Lakes tourism product in national media outlets

✓ 39 million impressions for Tompkins County tourism partners in outlets such as:

**DEPARTURES** **Forbes** **MEN'S JOURNAL** **ARCHITECTURAL DIGEST**

### Partner Programs

Successfully organized and presented two partner programs:

- **February:** Packaging seminar with 26 attendees
- **May:** First of newly required marketing workshops for partners who have been awarded tourism marketing grants through the Tompkins County Tourism Program with 42 people attending

### Agriculinary Tourism

The first round of agriculinary tourism microgrants have closed out and the second has been launched for the fall season. Projects have included everything from creating signage for better way-finding for visitors to our farm grant recipients, to developing marketing materials, to digital marketing and advertising for events. The agriculinary tourism marketing position has been elevated from part-time to full-time, to take the agriculinary tourism program to the next level.

### Media Tours

- Hosted two travel journalists and assisted two others with itineraries and activities
- Hosted new Executive Director of Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council and the team at Break the Ice Media on a Familiarization tour

### Coming soon

- Media tours for 19 social influencers
- 5 upcoming visits from travel journalists



**Social**

**INSTAGRAM**

37,193 Instagram user engagements in 2018

**6,694 Instagram followers** through June 2018 – 44% increase year over year

**FACEBOOK**

**40,500 Ithaca is Gorges** Facebook followers

**1,626 Ithaca Loves Teachers** Facebook followers – 25% increase year over year

**Top Insta takeover:**

May 21-27 @crookedseam highlighting local women small business owners



**VisitIthaca.com**

Visit Ithaca website page views – 788,849 in 2018 YTD compared to 735,927 in 2017

**Top visited pages on Visit Ithaca:**

- Ithaca Events with 281,266 – page views YTD
- Waterfalls with 34,685 – page views YTD
- Dining with 34,157 – page views YTD

**Event Highlights**

**Gorges Ithaca Half Marathon** grew by record numbers with the support of marketing efforts spearheaded by the CVB & Chamber as a co-sponsoring organization. Over 1130 registered this year compared to 740 registrants in 2017. 69% of registrants were from outside of Tompkins County and 18% were from outside of NYS.

Over 24 tourism partners participated in providing “Show your Bib and Save” promotional offers for attendees.

**Winter Recess**

2018’s Winter Recess campaign drew more than 4,000 attendees, up 8% over 2017 creating a minimum economic impact of \$152,646 of visitor spending over a ten-day period in February.



- ☑ Meetings & Conferences – YTD: 24 leads have been generated representing \$2,208,470 in potential economic impact and 9,026 room nights.
- ☑ Tour & Travel – YTD: 27 leads have been distributed representing \$950,952 in potential economic impact and 2,738 room nights.

### Meetings Market

“Retreat to Ithaca” campaign kicked off in June for the meetings and conference market. The CVB partnered with five hotel partners to attend the annual Empire State Society of Association Executives (ESSAE) tradeshow in Albany along with a Meeting Professionals International (MPI) networking reception.

- Through the addition of a focused meetings and conference sales effort, YOY: Sales leads have increased 21%

## Retreat TO ITHACA

"I appreciate your help and have often given you and your Ithaca Visitors Bureau much credit for playing a significant role in our meeting's success."

– Mary Schwark, President-elect,  
Woman's National Farm &  
Garden Association



### Tour & Travel

- Tompkins County was represented at **American Bus Association (ABA) – 40 appts., Heartland Travel Showcase – 28 appts., Pennsylvania Bus Association (PBA) Marketplace – 26 appts., PBA Annual Meeting – 11 appts., and Travel Alliance Partners (TAP) Dance – 26 appts.**, an invitation only tour operator sales retreat.
- Hosted the Travel Alliance Partner's Board of Directors meeting, exposing top tour operators to our destination, and offering them new experiences to include in their guaranteed departure tours. We've already had one direct booking.
- Hosted group of travel agents from the UK and Ireland on a Brand USA Familiarization tour in May.

"Martz is a wonderful company...and they're in good company when they work with people like you Sarah."

– Bill Guest from Martz Group  
regarding CVB Tour & Travel  
Manager Sarah Imes



**Simpleview**, customer relationship management software built specifically for destination marketing organizations, was rolled out in February. This software allows for database management of partner information, a central location for lead distribution, and is a hub for managing partner listings on the website. While CVB staff are continuing to optimize this tool, and roll out extranet trainings to partners, internally the system was fully implemented by March 1 and is resulting in better reporting and information management.

**Visitor Profile Study** – Jones, Lang, LaSalle (JLL) has been contracted to update the profile of visitors to Tompkins County. The benchmark study was performed in 2009 by Chmura. In spring, JLL launched a digital survey to past visitors as the primary instrument for collecting feedback. We have had 1300+ responses to the digital survey, exceeding the total survey response of the benchmark Chmura Study. The secondary collection instrument is a twelve-month randomized intercept survey, where visitors will be interviewed at various sites throughout Tompkins County. The intercept interviews are scheduled to begin in July.

**Tompkins Center for History & Culture** – Multiple team members are involved in the planning of the grand opening of the new Tompkins Center for History & Culture. Scheduled to open in early 2019, the Center will be home to the new Downtown Visitor Center.

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### A2D Training

The CVB and Workforce Development Board have partnered to bring a new Tourism Ambassador Training program entitled Arrival to Departure (A2D) to Tompkins County with an estimated launch date of October. Available on an ongoing basis, once training modules are completed by participants, they will become an “A2D Visitor Champion”. Following the completion of the online learning modules the CVB will offer an in-person class to help solidify the learning experience as well as a Familiarization tour of the County’s attractions. As the program becomes more established, the CVB will organize quarterly networking events for hospitality partners designed to showcase new and existing tourism partners offerings.

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### China Welcome

The CVB was instrumental in helping to organize the China Welcome program spearheaded by the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport and the China Ready committee. The program was held on May 9th for area businesses, hospitality partners and higher education institutions. The CVB is moving forward with creating translated materials and establishing a resource for tourism partners to access these services as well to help our destination become more welcoming to the China market.





## Ithaca/Tompkins County Convention & Visitors Bureau Staff Contacts

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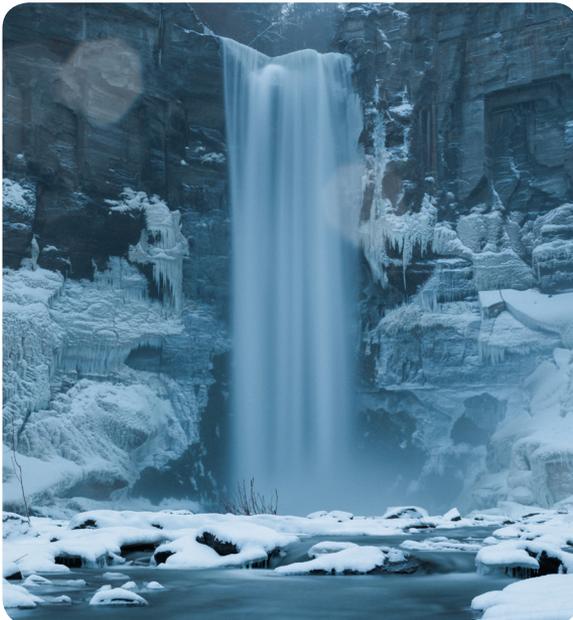
### **Maia Cooke**

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VISITOR EXPERIENCE SPECIALISTS:

**Josh Brooks | Cameron Coughlin | Amanda Kelly | Justin Scheidweiler**

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**Instagram post  
with the most  
engagement  
Jan. – June '18:**

Taughannock Falls  
in winter by  
@brycer19er,  
Jan. 30, 2018